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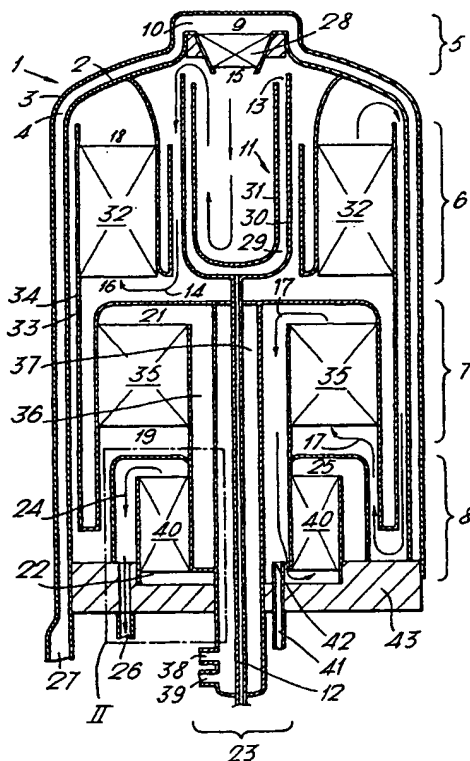
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(54) Title: FUEL PROCESSOR



(57) Abstract: A compact fuel processor for converting a hydrocarbonaceous fuel into hydrogen and carbon dioxide comprising in series a hydrocarbon conversion zone (5) for converting the hydrocarbonaceous fuel into a product gas comprising carbon monoxide and hydrogen, a water-gas shift reaction zone (6) containing a catalyst suitable for the water-gas shift conversion reaction, an auxiliary water-gas shift reaction zone (7) containing a catalyst suitable for the water-gas shift conversion reaction, and a carbon monoxide removal zone (8). The invention further relates to a fuel cell system comprising such a fuel processor and a fuel cell and to the use of such a fuel processor or such a fuel cell system.

WO 01/79112 A1

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FUEL PROCESSOR

The present invention relates to a fuel processor for converting a hydrocarbonaceous fuel into hydrogen and carbon dioxide. The invention further relates to the use of such a fuel processor, to an assembly comprising a fuel processor and a fuel cell and to the use of such an assembly.

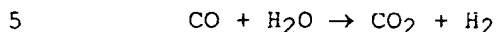
Since fuel cell technology is emerging for various small-scale applications, there is a need for relatively small fuel processors that can convert a hydrocarbonaceous fuel into a hydrogen-rich gas, in order to provide the hydrogen to be oxidised in a fuel cell to generate electricity. Especially for the on-board production of hydrogen in fuel-cell-powered vehicles and for domestic systems for generating heat and power, compact fuel processors are needed.

A promising type of fuel cell for small-scale applications is the proton exchange membrane (PEM) fuel cell. Since the catalyst of this type of fuel cell is poisoned by carbon monoxide, the carbon monoxide content of the hydrogen-rich gas to be fed to a PEM fuel cell should be below 100 ppm, preferably below 50 ppm or even more preferred below 20 ppm.

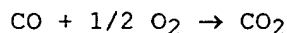
Recently proposed fuel processors for the conversion of hydrocarbonaceous fuel into hydrogen and carbon oxides are based on steam reforming, partial oxidation or a combination thereof. Reference is made for example to WO99/48805, wherein a process for the catalytic generation of hydrogen from hydrocarbons that combines steam reforming and partial oxidation has been disclosed.

However, the carbon monoxide concentration of the product gas of a steam reformer or a partial oxidation

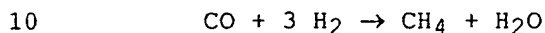
zone is too high for direct conversion in a PEM fuel cell. Therefore, the carbon monoxide is generally converted into carbon dioxide by means of the water-gas shift reaction



followed removal of the remaining carbon monoxide, either by selective oxidation according to the reaction



or by methanation according to the reaction



Fuel processors wherein the generation of a carbon monoxide containing hydrogen comprising gas, water-gas shift conversion and selective oxidation of carbon monoxide are integrated are known in the art.

15 In EP 861 802 is disclosed a fuel reforming apparatus wherein a liquid feed heating, an evaporation, a steam superheating, a reforming, a shift reaction, a selective CO oxidation, and a catalytic combustion portion are integrated. The different portions of the apparatus are
20 constituted of flat plate heat exchange elements. The use of plate heat exchange elements requires high quality surface finishing and sealing in order to prevent gas leakage, especially during incidentally pressure rises as a result of misoperation.

25 It is an object of the present invention to provide for a compact fuel processor wherein the reaction zone for partial oxidation and/or steam reforming and the catalytic reaction zones for water-gas shift conversion and removal of the remaining carbon monoxide are
30 integrated, preferably in a single vessel. Another object of the invention is to provide for a safe fuel processor, wherein the damage from accidental ignition can be easily contained. Still another object of the invention is to minimise the number of sealings in order to minimise

leakage of gas to the surroundings. A further object is to provide for a fuel processor that can be manufactured at low costs, preferably from mass-produced parts.

5 Accordingly, the invention relates to a fuel processor for producing hydrogen and carbon dioxide as defined in claim 1.

The fuel processor of the invention will now be illustrated with reference to schematic Figures 1 to 3. The Figures are not drawn to scale.

10 Figure 1 shows a longitudinal section of a first embodiment of the fuel processor according to the invention.

Figure 2 shows section II of Figure 1, drawn to a larger scale, with an alternative embodiment of the carbon monoxide removal zone.

15 Figure 3 shows a longitudinal section of a second embodiment of the fuel processor according to the invention which is particularly suitable for a large throughput of fuel.

20 The fuel processor shown in Figure 1 comprises a vessel 1 having a double-walled cylindrical side wall consisting of an inner shell 2 and an outer shell 3 between which a first fluid path 4 is defined. In the vessel 1 are contained a hydrocarbon conversion zone 5
25 for the catalytic partial oxidation of a hydrocarbonaceous fuel into a first product gas, an annular water-gas shift reaction zone 6 for the water-gas shift conversion of the first product gas into a second product gas, an annular auxiliary water-gas shift
30 reaction zone 7 for the water-gas shift conversion of the second product gas into a third product gas, and an annular carbon monoxide removal zone 8 comprising a catalyst for the selective oxidation of carbon monoxide in the third product gas.

The inlet 9 of the hydrocarbon conversion zone 5 is in fluid communication with the outlet 10 of the first fluid flow path 4.

5 The annular water-gas shift reaction zone 6 is arranged around an evaporator 11 into which a water supply conduit 12 debouches. The evaporator 11 has an outlet 13 for vapour.

In vessel 1 are further contained:

- 10 - a second fluid flow path 14 extending from the outlet 15 of the hydrocarbon conversion zone 5 along the evaporator 11 and its outlet 13 for vapour to the inlet 16 of the water-gas shift reaction zone 6;
- 15 - a third fluid flow path 17 extending from the outlet 18 of the water-gas shift reaction zone 6 along the inner surface of the inner shell 2 of the side wall of the vessel 1, via the auxiliary water-gas shift reaction zone 7, to the inlet 22 of the carbon monoxide removal zone 8, which flow path 17 includes part of a cooler 23 such that it extends through the warm side of the cooler 23; and
- 20 - a fourth fluid flow path 24 extending from the outlet 25 of the carbon monoxide removal zone 8 to the outlet 26 of the vessel.

25 The first fluid path 4 has an inlet 27 through which, during normal operation, the reactants for the hydrocarbon conversion zone 5 are supplied. In the embodiment of Figure 1, the vessel 1 is double-walled and an annular first fluid flow path 4 is defined between the inner 2 and outer shell 3 of the side wall.

30 Alternatively, the vessel 1 may have a single side wall and a first fluid flow path defined by a helical conduit located at the outside of the side wall.

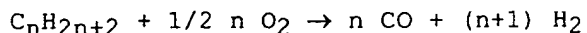
Preferably, the annular first fluid flow path 4 defined between the inner 2 and outer shell 3 contains a helical conduit (not shown) having an outlet which is in

35

fluid communication with the inlet 9 of the hydrocarbon conversion zone 5, and an inlet at the opposite side of the conduit. Thus, reactants for the hydrocarbon conversion zone, e.g. hydrocarbonaceous fuel and molecular oxygen-containing gas, can be supplied separately to the hydrocarbon conversion zone 5. The outlet of the helical conduit may be located in the annular first fluid path 4 at some distance from the outlet 10 of the annular first fluid path 4, such that the reactants can already be mixed in the downstream part of the annular first fluid path 4.

The hydrocarbon conversion zone 5 is suitable for converting a hydrocarbonaceous fuel into a first product gas comprising hydrogen and carbon monoxide. This zone may be a zone for the catalytic or non-catalytic partial oxidation and/or steam reforming of a hydrocarbonaceous fuel. In the case that the hydrocarbon conversion zone is a zone for an endothermic reaction, e.g. steam reforming, a source to provide the heat for that reaction has to be incorporated in the fuel processor. The required heat may for example be provided by a catalytic burner wherein the off-gases of the fuel cell that is combined with the fuel processor are oxidised.

Preferably, the hydrocarbon conversion zone is a catalytic partial oxidation zone. In the catalytic partial oxidation reaction, a mixture of a fuel and an oxygen-containing gas is contacted with a suitable catalyst and converted in an exothermic reaction into a mixture of carbon monoxide and hydrogen. If the fuel is a hydrocarbon, the reaction is as follows:



The catalytic partial oxidation process and suitable catalysts for this process are known in the art, for example from EP 629 578, EP 773 906, and WO 00/00426. The

catalyst is usually in the form of a fixed arrangement of catalyst carrier provided with catalytically active metal(s) and, optionally, a promoter. The catalyst carrier may be a refractory oxide, a metal, or a combination thereof. Suitable fixed arrangements are a fixed bed of catalyst carrier particles, a ceramic or metal monolithic structure such as a foam or a honeycomb, an arrangement of metal wire or gauze, or a combination thereof.

In the embodiment shown in Figure 1, the hydrocarbon conversion zone comprises catalyst 28 in the form of a ceramic foam provided with catalytically active metals suitable for the partial oxidation of a hydrocarbonaceous fuel.

The hydrocarbon conversion zone 5 may be inside the vessel 1 or mounted on the outside of the vessel. Preferably, the hydrocarbon conversion zone is located in or near the top of the vertical vessel 1, more preferably in the top of the vessel, such as in the embodiment shown in Figure 1. The inlet of the hydrocarbon conversion zone is preferably located at its upper end.

During normal operation of the fuel processor according to the invention shown in Figure 1, a hydrocarbonaceous fuel and an molecular oxygen-containing gas, preferably air, are charged via inlet 27 and flow through the first fluid flow path 4 to the hydrocarbon conversion zone 5. The hydrocarbonaceous fuel may be a gaseous or liquid fuel, such as hydrocarbons and/or oxygenates. The fuel is gaseous when contacting catalyst 28. Therefore, if a liquid fuel is used, it is vaporised in the first fluid flow path 4. Preferred hydrocarbonaceous fuels are gaseous hydrocarbons such as methane, natural gas, ethane, propane, and liquefied petroleum gas (LPG).

At the inlet 9 of the hydrocarbon conversion zone 5, the temperature of the mixture of reactants is generally in the range of from 250 to 400 °C. Optionally, additional reactants such as steam are supplied to the hydrocarbon conversion zone through an additional conduit (not shown) or through the first fluid flow path 4.

The hydrocarbonaceous fuel is partially oxidised into a first product gas comprising carbon monoxide and hydrogen, usually having a temperature in the range of from 750 to 1100 °C at the outlet 15 of catalyst 28. If methane is used as fuel, the carbon monoxide concentration in the first product gas is typically in the range of from 15 to 20% by volume, based on the dry product gas.

The first product gas flows through the second fluid flow path 14 to the water-gas shift reaction zone 6. Since the second fluid flow path extends along the evaporator 11 and its outlet 13 for vapour, the hot first product gas causes evaporation of water in evaporator 11, resulting in cooling of the first product gas, and water vapour is entrained with the first product gas to the water-gas shift reaction zone 6.

In the embodiment shown in Figure 1, the evaporator 11 is in the form of a double-walled receptacle defining a water reservoir 29 between its two walls 30, 31 into which the water supply conduit 12 debouches. The water reservoir 29 has an annular outlet 13 for vapour at its upper end.

The temperature of the gases entering the water-gas shift reaction zone 6 may be set at a desired temperature by adjusting the water supply through conduit 12 to the evaporator 11.

Part of the carbon monoxide in the first product gas is shifted with the water vapour to carbon dioxide and hydrogen in the water-gas shift reaction zone 6. This

reaction zone 6 is arranged around the evaporator 11 and comprises a catalyst 32 in the form of an annular fixed arrangement suitable for the water-gas shift conversion. Such catalysts are known in the art.

5 The water-gas shift conversion is an exothermic reaction. In the preferred embodiment wherein the fixed arrangement of catalyst 32 is not cooled internally, the temperature of the gas leaving the catalyst is higher than the temperature of the gases entering the catalyst.

10 Preferably, the water-gas shift reaction zone 6, is a zone for the high-temperature water-gas shift reaction. Catalysts for this reaction are known in the art. Typically, these catalysts are promoted chromium-iron oxide catalysts. The reaction typically operates at
15 300-500 °C. Typically, the temperature of the gases at the inlet 16 of the water-gas shift reaction zone 6 is in the range of from 300 to 450 °C, preferably 350 to 400 °C and the temperature of the gas leaving catalyst 32 at the outlet 18, i.e. the second product gas, is typically in
20 the range of from 350 to 530 °C, preferably 400 to 480 °C. The carbon monoxide concentration in the second product gas is usually in the range of from 2 to 5% by volume, based on the dry product gas.

25 The second product gas flows from the outlet 18 of the water-gas shift reaction zone 6 through the third fluid flow path 17 extending along the inner surface of the inner surface of the inner shell 2 of the side wall of the vessel 1 to the inlet 19 of the auxiliary water-gas shift reaction zone 7. The third flow path 17
30 comprises an annular space 33 that is defined by the inner shell 2 and plate 34. The second product gas flowing in the annular space 33 is in counter-flow heat-exchange relationship with the reactants of the hydrocarbon conversion zone that flow through the first
35 fluid flow path 4. This results in cooling of the second

product gas, typically from a temperature in the range of from 400 to 480 °C at the outlet 18 of the water-gas shift reaction zone 6 to a temperature in the range of from 180 to 220 °C at the inlet 19 of the auxiliary water-gas shift reaction zone 7. If needed in order to achieve the desired temperature at the inlet 19 of the auxiliary water-gas shift reaction zone 7, additional cooling at the side wall 2, 3 of the vessel 1 may be applied.

The annular auxiliary water-gas shift reaction zone 7 comprises a catalyst 35 in the form of an annular fixed arrangement suitable for the water-gas shift conversion, preferably for the low-temperature water-gas shift conversion. Low-temperature shift catalysts are known in the art and typically are copper-zinc catalysts supported on alumina.

In this zone 7, part of the remaining carbon monoxide in the second product gas is water-gas shifted with the remaining water into carbon dioxide. The reaction typically operates at 190-240 °C. The temperature of the effluent of the auxiliary water-gas shift reaction zone, the third product gas, at the outlet 21 of the auxiliary water-gas shift reaction zone 7 will typically be in the range of from 210 to 270 °C, due to an adiabatic temperature increase. The carbon monoxide concentration in the third product gas is typically in the range of from 0.1 to 0.6% by volume, based on the dry product gas.

The third product gas flows from the outlet 21 of the auxiliary water-gas shift reaction zone 7 to the inlet 22 of the carbon monoxide removal zone 8. Between the outlet 21 of the auxiliary water-gas shift reaction zone 7 and the inlet 22 of the carbon monoxide removal zone 8, fluid flow path 17 includes a cooler 23. Cooler 23 comprises an annular space 36, i.e. the warm side of the cooler, surrounding a coolant circuit 37

having an inlet 38 and an outlet 39 for coolant. The annular space 36 forms part of fluid flow path 17. Preferably, the cooler 23 is centrally arranged in vessel 1. In the embodiment of Figure 1, the cooler 23 is
5 surrounding water supply conduit 12. Alternatively, the cool side of the cooler may be formed by water supply conduit 12.

Typically, the third product gas is cooled from a temperature in the range of from 210 to 270 °C at the
10 outlet 21 of the auxiliary water-gas shift reaction zone to a temperature in the range of from 120-170 °C at the inlet 22 of the carbon monoxide removal zone.

The annular carbon monoxide removal zone 8 comprises a catalyst 40 in the form of a fixed arrangement suitable
15 for the selective oxidation of carbon monoxide. Such catalysts are known in the art and usually comprise one or more noble metals on a refractory oxide catalyst carrier. Suitable fixed arrangements of catalyst may be a
20 fixed bed of catalyst particles, i.e. catalyst carrier particles provided with noble metal(s), or a ceramic or metal monolithic catalyst support coated with the catalyst. During normal operation, the remaining carbon monoxide in the third product gas is selectively oxidised
25 to carbon dioxide in this zone to obtain an effluent having a carbon monoxide concentration of less than 100 ppmv, preferably less than 50 ppmv, more preferable less than 20 ppmv. The molecular oxygen-containing gas, usually air, required for this reaction is supplied to
30 the carbon monoxide removal zone 8 through supply conduit 41 having an outlet 42 that is in fluid communication with inlet 22 of the carbon monoxide removal zone 8. In order to achieve good mixing of the air with the third product gas before contacting catalyst 40, it is preferred that the outlet 42 of air

supply conduit 41 is located in the annular space 36 of cooler 23, such as shown in the embodiment of Figure 1.

The operating temperature of the selective oxidation reaction is typically in the range of from 100 to 200 °C. Ideally, in order to achieve optimum selectivity, the temperature within zone 8 is kept as constant as possible, i.e. steep temperature gradients within the fixed arrangement of catalyst are minimised. Therefore, the fixed arrangement of catalyst 40 of zone 8 is preferably mounted on a flange 43 that can remove the heat produced in the exothermic selective oxidation reaction. In the embodiment shown in Figure 1, flange 43 is cooled by the cooling water of cooler 23. Flange 43 may be provided with additional cooling means. It is preferred that flange 43 is located at the outside of the vessel 1, for example the bottom of the vessel such as shown in Figure 1, since this facilitates heat removal.

Preferably, in order to minimise temperature gradients in zone 8, the fixed arrangement of catalyst of zone 8 comprises a metal foam as catalyst support provided with the catalyst, more preferably the catalyst is coated on the metal foam.

Preferably, in order to broaden the operating window, especially with respect to throughput, zone 8 comprises two catalyst beds for the selective oxidation of carbon monoxide which are arranged in series. In the embodiment of zone 8 shown in Figure 2, the fixed arrangement of catalyst 40 as shown in Figure 1 is now depicted by two separate catalyst beds 44 and 45. The fuel processor comprises a second supply conduit 46 for supplying molecular oxygen-containing gas, preferably air, to the second catalyst bed 45. The outlet 47 of second supply conduit 46 is located in the fluid flow path 48 extending from the outlet 49 of the first catalyst bed 44 to the inlet 50 of the second catalyst bed 45. The fluid flow

path 48 may comprise a helical coil 51 to increase the length of the fluid flow path and thereby improving mixing of air with the effluent of the first catalyst bed 44.

5 If the carbon monoxide removal zone contains two catalyst beds for the selective oxidation of carbon monoxide, arranged in series and mounted on a flange, the flange may be advantageously used to remove heat from the effluent of the first catalyst bed in that zone before it
10 enters the second catalyst bed.

 In the embodiment of the invention as shown in Figure 1, the vessel 1 of the fuel processor of the invention contains in sequence, in longitudinal direction the water-gas shift reaction zone 6, the auxiliary water-
15 gas shift reaction zone 7, and the carbon monoxide removal zone 8. An advantage of such an arrangement is that, during normal operation, the temperature is decreasing from one side of the vessel to the other, i.e. from the water-gas shift reaction zone to the carbon
20 monoxide removal zone, thereby minimising heat losses.

 Since the water-gas shift conversion reaction is exothermic and the catalysts of zones 6 and 7 are usually not internally cooled, the temperature at the outlet of these zones is usually higher than that at the inlet. In
25 order to maintain a constantly decreasing temperature in longitudinal direction of the vessel in the above-described preferred arrangement, it is preferred that the inlet of the water-gas shift reaction zone is located at the side of the auxiliary water-gas shift reaction zone
30 and the outlet of the water-gas shift reaction zone at the side of the hydrocarbon conversion zone and that inlet of the auxiliary water-gas shift reaction zone is located at the side of the carbon monoxide removal zone
35 and the outlet of the auxiliary water-gas shift reaction zone at the side of the water-gas shift reaction zone.

In Figure 3 is shown a second embodiment of the fuel processor according to the invention. In Figure 3, parts similar to parts drawn in Figure 1 or 2 are referred to with the same reference numerals. The embodiment shown in Figure 3 differs from the embodiment shown in Figure 1 in that the vessel is separated into two parts 52 and 53 by flange 43, located in the middle of the vessel. The embodiment shown in Figure 3 is especially suitable if, starting from the embodiment shown in Figure 1, the throughput has to be increased to about twice the original value. By using the same moulds for the side walls of the vessel, a processor having the double capacity can be constructed.

The first part 52 of the vessel has a double walled side wall defining the first fluid flow path 4 between its inner 2 and outer shell 3. The first part 52 of the vessel contains the hydrocarbon conversion zone 5, the water-gas shift reaction zone 6, which is arranged around the evaporator 11, and part of the carbon monoxide removal zone 8. The second part 53 of the vessel has a single side wall 54 and contains the auxiliary water-gas shift reaction zone 7 and part of the carbon monoxide removal zone 8.

As in the embodiment shown in Figure 1, the reactants for the hydrocarbon conversion zone are supplied via the first fluid flow path 4 to the hydrocarbon conversion zone 5 where a first product gas is formed. The first product gas flows via the second fluid path 14 along the evaporator 11 and its opening for vapour 13 to the inlet 16 of the water-gas shift reaction zone 6 where it is converted into a second product gas. The second product gas flows via the third fluid flow path 17 to the inlet 19 of the auxiliary water-gas shift reaction zone. The third fluid flow path 17 extends along the inner surface of side wall 3 and through flange 43 to the

inlet 19 of the auxiliary water-gas shift reaction zone 7. In the auxiliary water-gas shift reaction zone the second product gas is converted into a third product gas, which flows from the outlet 21 of the auxiliary water-gas shift reaction zone to the inlet 22 of the carbon monoxide removal zone.

In the embodiment shown in Figure 3, zone 8 has two catalyst beds 44, 45 for the selective oxidation of carbon monoxide, each bed divided in a first 44a, 45a and a second part 44b, 45b of the bed. The first catalyst bed 44a, 44b is contained in the second part 53 of the vessel and the second bed 45a, 45b is contained in the first part 52 of the vessel. During normal operation, the effluent of the first catalyst bed 44 flows via fluid flow path 48 to the second catalyst bed 45. Air is supplied to the inlet 22 of the first catalyst bed 44 and to the inlet 50 of the second catalyst bed 45 via air supply conduits (not shown) that extend through flange 43.

In the preferred embodiments shown in Figures 1 and 3, the fuel processor contains two reaction zones for water-gas shift conversion, i.e. reaction zones 6 and 7. Alternatively, the fuel processor may contain a single reaction zone for catalytic water-gas shift conversion, preferably a zone for medium temperature shift conversion (MTS). Suitable MTS catalysts are known in the art.

Instead of an evaporator, the fuel processor according to the invention may comprise another type of steam generator, for example a vaporiser. The steam generator is located such that, during normal operation of the fuel processor according to the invention, the heat required for steam generation is provided by heat exchange with the product gas comprising carbon monoxide and hydrogen from the hydrocarbon conversion zone.

In the fuel processor according to the invention, the effluent gas of the water-gas shift reaction zone, i.e. reaction zone 6 in Figures 1 and 3, is cooled against the fluid flowing in the first fluid flow path, i.e. the flow path in or at the outside of the side wall of the vessel. In the preferred embodiments shown in Figures 1 and 3, the effluent gas from the water-gas shift reaction zone is cooled against the reactants for the hydrocarbon conversion zone, i.e. zone 5.

Alternatively, the effluent may be cooled against a different fluid flow. It will be appreciated that in that case, the outlet 10 of the first fluid flow path 4 is not in fluid communication with the inlet 9 of the hydrocarbon conversion zone 5. For example, if the fuel processor according to the invention is combined with a fuel cell and a catalytic after burner for combusting the off-gases of the fuel cell, it may be advantageous to pre-heat the reactants for the hydrocarbon conversion zone by heat exchange with the flue gas of the catalytic after burner and to use the air needed for the catalytic after burner for cooling the effluent of the water-gas shift reaction zone by supplying it to the after burner via the first fluid flow path.

The fuel processor according to the invention is very compact. Preferably, the volume of the vessel is at most 40 litres, more preferably at most 25 litres, even more preferably at most 15 litres. Due to its compactness, heat losses are relatively low and the efficiency of the fuel processor has been found to remain constant at turn-down ratios in the range of from 1:5 to 1:10. Reference herein to efficiency is to the lower heating value (LHV) of the hydrogen produced divided by the LHV of the hydrocarbonaceous feedstock.

It is an advantage of the fuel processor according to the present invention that some internal leakage of gases

between the various reaction zones is allowed, without adversely affecting the carbon monoxide concentration of the product gas, i.e. the effluent of the carbon monoxide removal zone. The arrangement of the different reaction zones is such that leakage of a part of the first product gas to the auxiliary water-gas shift reaction zone or of a part of the second product gas to the carbon monoxide removal zone will not adversely affect the performance of the fuel processor. As a results, gas-tight sealings between the different parts of the fuel processor are not required and the fuel processor can, for example, be constructed from mass-produced deep-drawn parts that may be assembled by simply pressing the parts together.

Moreover, the construction of the fuel processor according to the invention is such that a flame extinguishing zone exist between the hydrocarbon conversion zone and water-gas shift reaction zone on one hand and the auxiliary water-gas shift reaction zone and carbon monoxide removal zone on the other hand. The annular space 33 between inner side wall 2 and plate 34 acts as a quenching zone. Further, the hydrocarbon conversion zone and water-gas shift reaction zone on the one hand and the auxiliary water-gas shift reaction zone and carbon monoxide removal zone on the other hand are contained in compartments that are more or less separated from each other by the internals of the fuel processor. In the event that an unwanted explosion would occur in one of the compartments, the energy of the explosion will be absorbed by the deformation of the internals separating the compartments, resulting in a diminished force on the side wall of the vessel.

Since the fuel processor according to the invention is able to convert a hydrocarbonaceous fuel into a hydrogen-containing gas having less than 100 ppm carbon monoxide, it is particularly suitable to be used in

combination with a fuel cell, especially a PEM fuel cell. Therefore, the present invention also relates to a fuel cell system comprising the above-defined fuel processor and a fuel cell, in particular a PEM fuel cell.

5 In further aspects, the invention relates to the use of a fuel processor as hereinbefore defined for the conversion of a hydrocarbonaceous fuel into a gas stream comprising hydrogen and carbon dioxide having less than 100 ppm carbon monoxide, and to the use of the above-
10 defined fuel cell system for the conversion of a hydrocarbonaceous fuel into electric energy.

The present invention will be further illustrated by the following example.

EXAMPLE

15 Fuel processor

Natural gas was converted into a hydrogen-rich gas in a fuel processor according to the invention having a construction similar to that illustrated in Figure 1, but having a carbon monoxide removal zone as shown in
20 Figure 2.

The hydrocarbon conversion zone contained a catalyst for the catalytic partial oxidation of hydrocarbons in the form of a 65 ppi (pores per inch) yttria-containing partially-stabilised zirconia foam (Y-PSZ) that had been
25 provided with 2.5% by weight of iridium, 2.5% by weight of rhodium and 7% by weight of zirconium. The catalyst had been prepared by impregnating a 65 ppi Y-PSZ foam with a solution comprising iridium tetrachloride, rhodium trichloride, and zirconyl nitrate and subsequently drying
30 and calcining the impregnated foam.

The water-gas shift reaction zone contained a fixed bed of pellets of a commercially available iron-based HTS (high temperature shift) catalyst (ICI-Katalco-71-5m).

The auxiliary water-gas shift reaction zone contained
35 a fixed bed of pellets of a commercially available zinc-

copper-based LTS (low temperature shift) catalyst (ICI-Katalco-83-3mr).

5 The carbon monoxide removal zone contained two annular foams of a commercially available aluminium alloy (DUOCEL, ex. ERG, Oakland, USA) (DUOCEL is a trademark) coated with a catalyst for the selective oxidation of carbon monoxide. The catalyst comprised Ru and Pt on an alpha-alumina carrier.

10 The total volume of the vessel was 10 L; the volumes of the individual reaction zones were as follows:
hydrocarbon conversion zone (CPO) 0.02 L;
water-gas shift reaction zone (HTS) 1.5 L;
auxiliary water-gas shift reaction zone (LTS) 1.5 L;
carbon monoxide removal zone first catalyst bed
15 (SelOx I) 0.5 L, second catalyst bed (SelOx II) 0.5 L.

Natural gas conversion

A stream of natural gas (0.18 g/s) was supplied via a helical conduit (not shown in Figure 1), spiralling in upward direction in the first fluid flow path 4, to the
20 inlet 9 of the hydrocarbon conversion zone and air (0.78 g/s) was supplied via inlet 27 and first fluid flow path 4 to inlet 9. The temperature of the resulting feed mixture at inlet 9 was 350-400 °C, the pressure 1.2 bar (absolute).

25 The temperatures at the inlet and outlet of each reaction zone and the carbon monoxide concentration at each outlet was measured. The results are given in the Table below. CO concentrations are base on the volume of dry product gas. The amount of water evaporated was
30 0.26 g/s. The amount of hydrogen produced was 28.6 Nl/min.

Table

Reaction zone	location	temperature (°C)	CO concentration (% by volume)
CPO	inlet	350-400	
	outlet	800-900	16-18
HTS	inlet	350-400	
	outlet	430-480	2-3
LTS	inlet	190-220	
	outlet	220-250	0.2-0.4
SelOx	inlet I	120-170	
	outlet I	120-170	
	inlet II	120-170	
	outlet II	120-170	< 10 ppmv

C L A I M S

1. A fuel processor for converting a hydrocarbonaceous fuel into hydrogen and carbon dioxide comprising:
- (a) a vessel having a side wall and an outlet;
 - (b) a first fluid flow path, located in or at the outside
5 of the side wall, having an inlet and an outlet;
 - (c) a hydrocarbon conversion zone for converting the hydrocarbonaceous fuel into a product gas comprising carbon monoxide and hydrogen having an inlet and an outlet;
 - 10 (d) a steam generator;
 - (e) a water-gas shift reaction zone having an inlet and an outlet and containing a catalyst suitable for the water-gas shift conversion reaction;
 - (f) a second fluid flow path extending from the outlet of
15 the hydrocarbon conversion zone, along the steam generator, to the inlet of the water-gas shift reaction zone;
 - (g) a carbon monoxide removal zone having an inlet and an outlet, which zone contains a catalyst suitable for
20 selectively oxidising carbon monoxide or for methanation of carbon monoxide; and
 - (h) a third fluid flow path extending from the outlet of the water-gas shift reaction zone, along the inner surface of the side wall of the vessel, to the inlet of
25 carbon monoxide removal zone,
- wherein at least the steam generator and the water-gas shift reaction zone are contained in the vessel.
2. A fuel processor according to claim 1, wherein the carbon monoxide removal zone is contained in the vessel,
30 which fuel processor further comprises a fourth fluid

flow path extending from the outlet of the carbon monoxide removal zone to the outlet of the vessel.

3. A fuel processor according to claim 2, wherein, in longitudinal direction, the vessel contains in sequence
5 the water-gas shift reaction zone and the carbon monoxide removal zone.

4. A fuel processor according to any of claims 1 to 3, further comprising an auxiliary water-gas shift reaction zone having an inlet and an outlet, which auxiliary
10 water-gas shift reaction zone contains a catalyst suitable for the water-gas shift conversion reaction, and wherein the third fluid flow path extends from the outlet of the water-gas shift reaction zone, along the inner surface of the side wall of the vessel, via the auxiliary
15 water-gas shift reaction zone to the inlet of the carbon monoxide removal zone and includes a cooler between the outlet of the auxiliary water-gas shift reaction zone and the inlet of the carbon monoxide removal zone.

5. A fuel processor according to claim 4, wherein the
20 auxiliary water-gas shift reaction zone is contained in the vessel.

6. A fuel processor according to claims 2 and 5, wherein, in longitudinal direction, the vessel contains in sequence the water-gas shift reaction zone, the
25 auxiliary water-gas shift reaction zone, and the carbon monoxide removal zone.

7. A fuel processor according to any one of claims 4 to 6, wherein the auxiliary water-gas shift reaction zone is an annular reaction zone arranged around the cooler.

8. A fuel processor according to any of the preceding
30 claims, wherein the inlet of the hydrocarbon conversion zone is in fluid communication with the outlet of the first fluid flow path.

9. A fuel processor according to any of the preceding
35 claims, wherein the vessel has an at least partly double-

walled side wall comprising an inner shell and an outer shell between which the first fluid flow path is defined.

10. A fuel processor according to any of the preceding claims, wherein the hydrocarbon conversion zone comprises
5 a catalyst in a fixed arrangement suitable for the partial oxidation of the hydrocarbonaceous fuel with an oxygen-containing gas and/or for steam reforming of the hydrocarbonaceous fuel.

11. A fuel processor according to any of the preceding
10 claims, wherein the hydrocarbon conversion zone is contained in the vessel.

12. A fuel processor according to claim 11, wherein the hydrocarbon conversion zone is located at the upper end of the vessel.

13. A fuel processor according to any of the preceding
15 claims, wherein the steam generator is an evaporator.

14. A fuel processor according to claim 13, wherein the evaporator is in the form of a double-walled receptacle, wherein the walls define a water reservoir.

15. A fuel processor according to any of the preceding
20 claims, wherein the carbon monoxide removal zone contains a catalyst suitable for selectively oxidising carbon monoxide.

16. A fuel processor according to claim 15, wherein the
25 carbon monoxide removal zone comprises two catalyst beds arranged in series.

17. A fuel processor according to claim 15 or 16, wherein
the catalyst in the carbon monoxide removal zone is coated on a metal support, preferably on a metal foam,
30 more preferably on an aluminium-containing foam.

18. A fuel processor according to any of the preceding claims, wherein the carbon monoxide removal zone is mounted on a flange.

19. A fuel processor according to claim 18, wherein the
35 flange is the bottom of the vessel.

20. A fuel processor according to claim 5 and claim 18,
wherein the flange is located in the middle of the vessel
and wherein the hydrocarbon conversion zone and the
water-gas shift reaction zone are located at one side of
5 the flange and the auxiliary water-gas shift reaction
zone is located at the other side of the flange.
21. A fuel processor according to any of the preceding
claims, wherein the vessel has a volume of at most 40
litres, preferably at most 25 litres, more preferably at
10 most 15 litres.
22. Fuel cell system comprising a fuel processor
according to any of the preceding claims and a fuel cell,
preferably a proton exchange membrane fuel cell.
23. The use of a fuel processor according to any of
15 claims 1 to 21 for the conversion of a hydrocarbonaceous
fuel into a gas stream comprising hydrogen and carbon
dioxide having less than 100 ppmv carbon monoxide,
preferably less than 50 ppmv, more preferably less than
20 ppmv.
- 20 24. The use of a fuel cell system according to claim 22
for the conversion of a hydrocarbonaceous fuel into
electric energy.

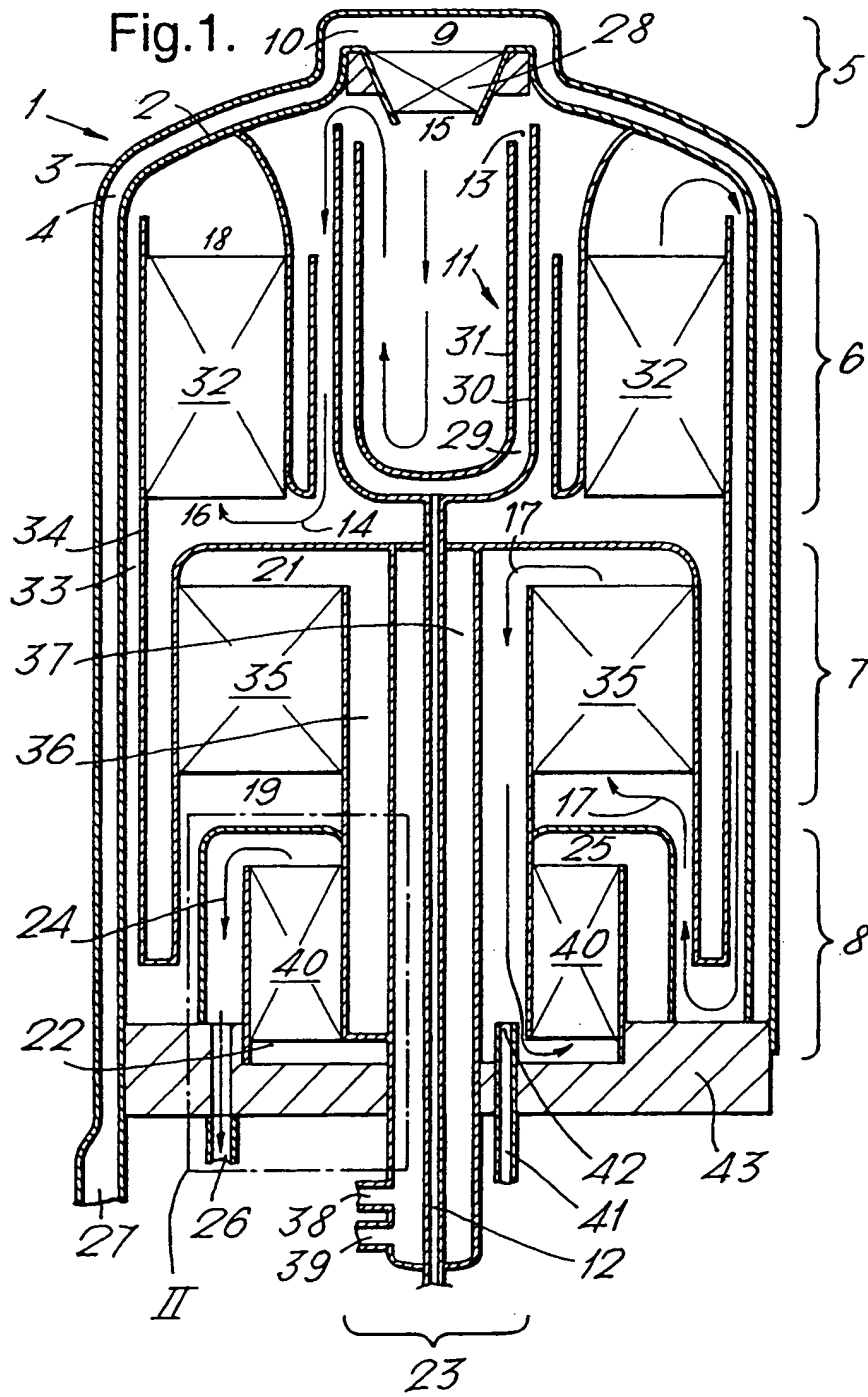


Fig.2.

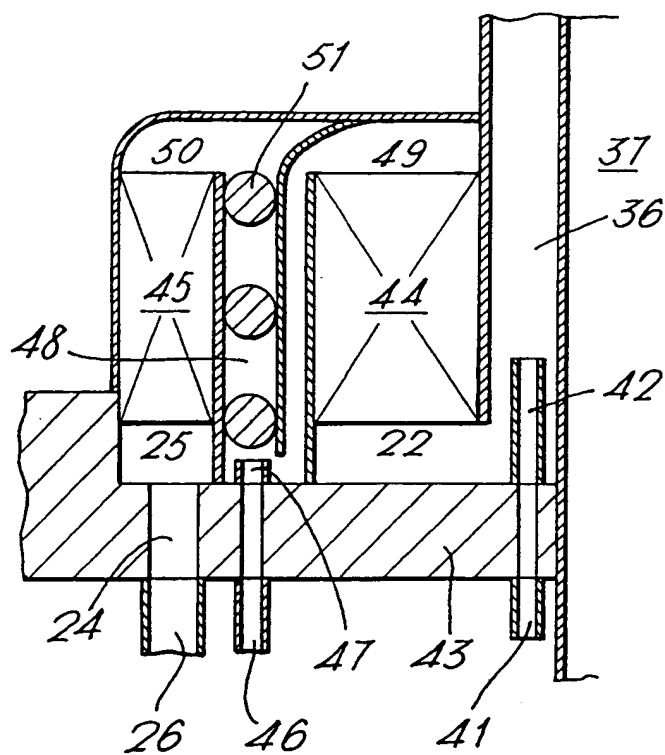
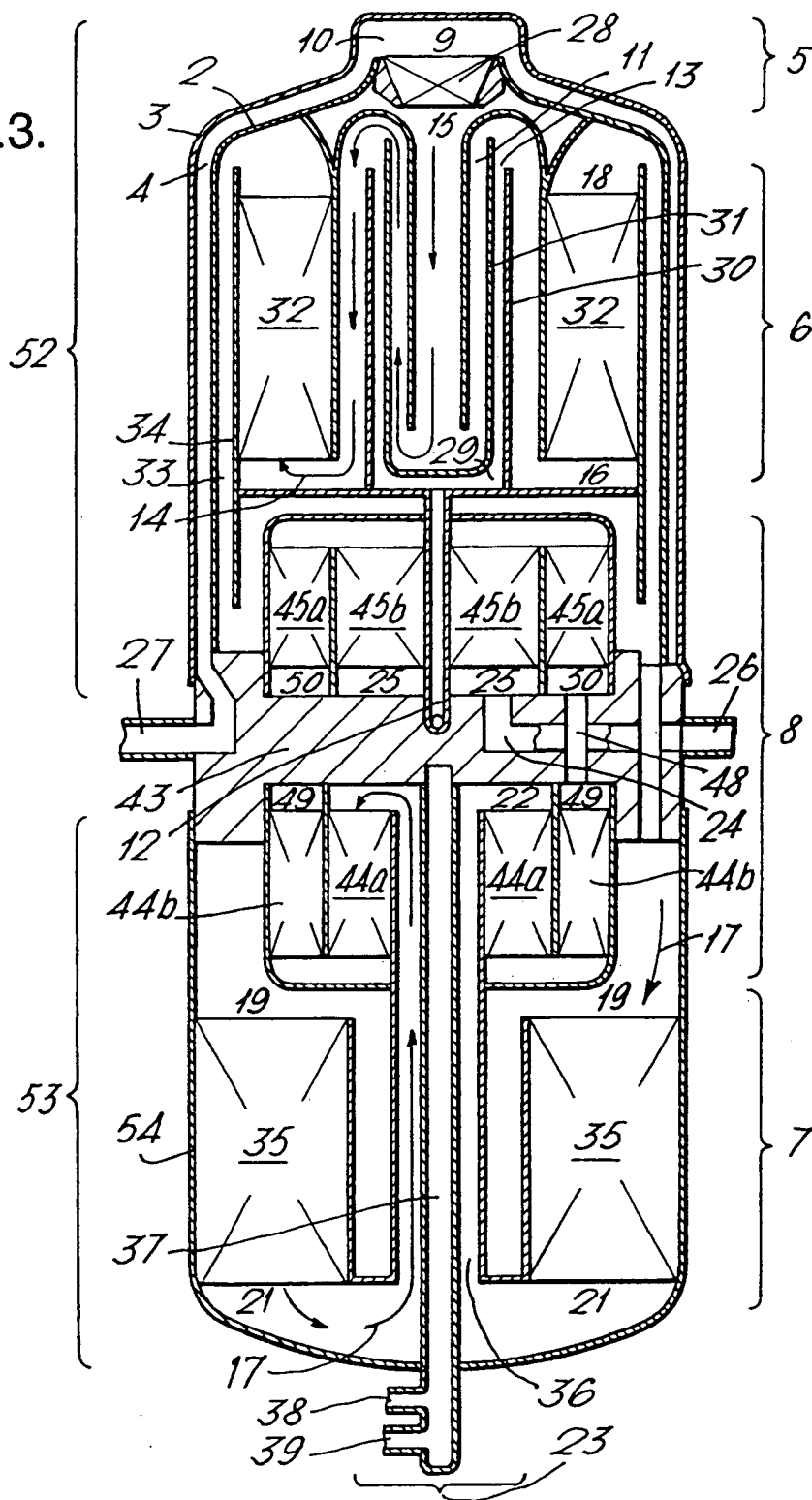


Fig.3.



INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International Application No
PCT/EP 01/04297

A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER

IPC 7 C01B3/58 C01B3/48 C01B3/38 B01J8/04 B01J8/02
H01M8/06

According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC

B. FIELDS SEARCHED

Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols)

IPC 7 C01B B01J H01M

Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched

Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practical, search terms used)

EPO-Internal, WPI Data, PAJ, INSPEC, COMPENDEX, CHEM ABS Data

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☒ Further documents are listed in the continuation of box C.

☒ Patent family members are listed in annex.

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Date of the actual completion of the international search

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INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International Application No

PCT/EP 01/04297

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